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Subject: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [Ultrax](#) on Sun, 19 Nov 2017 08:41:28 GMT

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What was OS/2 anyways? Was it intended to replace Windows, for home users, or for workstation use? As far as I know, it was a commercial failure.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [zero](#) on Sun, 18 Nov 2018 22:19:07 GMT

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Ultrax wrote on Sun, 19 November 2017 08:41: What was OS/2 anyways? Was it intended to replace Windows, for home users, or for workstation use? As far as I know, it was a commercial failure.

It was intended for all three, plus server, originally. IBM was never any good at marketing its personal computing products, and most disasterously so it was with OS/2.

When the OS/2 project originally started in conjunction with Microsoft in the late 1980s, it was intended as a complete replacement for DOS and Windows, which was then in its completely unuseable infancy and viewed as a stop-gap really. However, after version 1.3 of OS/2 - the last 16-bit version - MS withdrew from the project and IBM went fully 32-bit with OS/2 2.0.

From early on, one of the most wide-spread adoptions of OS/2 occurred in the banking sector, accounting for the largest slice of the ABM/ATM sector, where its successor is apparantly still used to some extent. The consumer sector didn't really show much uptake until Warp 3 came along in 1994. Marketing aside, the two biggest factors working against OS/2 were IBM's continuing support for running DOS and Windows 3.x from within OS/2, and - to some extent also as a result of this - the failure to get sufficient numbers of larger developers on board and major apps ported to native OS/2.

Furthermore, OS/2 was hamstrung by IBM's inability to decide exactly what sector should be the main target of the OS. By the time Merlin was in development IBM's personal computing division (which was in charge of OS/2 development) was already in the process of being dissolved. When Warp 4 finally reached the market in 97, it was already pretty much dead in the water, and IBM eventually decided to discontinue it and produce a derivative for the emerging commercial online market, e-commstation.

If handled properly and marketed properly, OS/2 could have killed off the infant Windows 95 and even NT 4, as well as any remaining MacOS support, and both MS and Apple did perceive it as a major threat. (Hence also MS's financial support for Apple at the time, which coincided with Steve Jobs and NeXT - effectively - buying out and bailing out Apple which was on the verge of bankruptcy already.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [3xGuru](#) on Mon, 13 Mar 2023 17:59:52 GMT

zero wrote on Mon, 19 November 2018 01:19Ultrax wrote on Sun, 19 November 2017 08:41What was OS/2 anyways? Was it intended to replace Windows, for home users, or for workstation use? As far as I know, it was a commercial failure.

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Thanks for explaining, I didn't know all that I had thought later Versions of Windows 95 where called OS2 and that Microsoft had just copied it from IBM but the later versions of Win95 are known as OSR2 "That is OEM Service Releases" but it is a bit confusing if you are looking for Windows 95 when they call it OSR2. However it was NT OS/2 3.0 that Microsoft Rebranded as Windows NT.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OS/2>

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [Bruce1952](#) on Mon, 15 May 2023 14:10:24 GMT

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I think IBM became tired of fending off the multitude of IBM compatible computers in the late

1980's, realizing they couldn't compete with the lower-cost competitors and unable to stop them. So, they bailed out of the home computer market with little fanfare. The shame of it all is that IBM made some of the finest PC's obtainable; most were built like tanks and had keyboards with individual coil springs under each key cap. Yes, Apple was on the way out, having made mistakes with the Lisa and the new McIntosh not breaking any sales records. The Apple-IIc turned out to be a commercial failure (unlike the venerable Apple-II and II+ models which were great machines) and Apple withdrew from the home computer market to concentrate on a revamped McIntosh. Some businesses actually did make use of OS/2, but that died out as the 1990's wore down toward year/2k.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [CharelkenDop](#) on Mon, 23 Sep 2024 01:32:30 GMT

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In fact OS/2 was true preemptive multitasking and thus more stable, windows till 9x, ME where cooperative multitasking systems. The difference is that the multitasking in OS/2 was mostly managed, well managed by the Operating System itself. In Windows the processes, tasks, programs had to free their time slice, but if a process hung, mostly the full Operating System Hung/crashed. That changed with the New Technology aka NT windows branch. Not only was NT fully 32 bit with preemptive multitasking und a multy user system, it was not built on a MS-DOS base like the versions 1 to 9x/ME. It had a better file system NTFS with logging, better network security, access control built in the file system... and it had similar workstation & server systems with the Windows 3.x interface in the first versions NT 3.1, NT 3.5x.

When OS/2 Warp 3 came out. Here in Belgium they even gave the CD for free (without the Bonus Pack)... A few months after that MS started its big selling campaign for Windows 95. OS/2 the better OS lost the battle due to the good marketing of Microsoft. And the configuration of Win 95 was easier (plug & play hardware recognition) than OS/2 plus it had better connectivity possibilities... OS/2 needed extra software for good networking capabilities and adding new hardware used to be a real pain in the ass mostly... Even starting up in OS/2 could be difficult when your hard disk or CDROM drive had been changed. In 1996 NT4 came out, even more stable than the previous 3.5x. NT4 had the new interface with the start menu from Windows 95.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [CharelkenDop](#) on Mon, 23 Sep 2024 01:40:02 GMT

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It's funny but Microsoft did never rebrand OS/2 Warp to NT. NT 3.1 - 3.5 existed before OS/2 Warp. But it's true, they where both 32 bit operating systems and some of the former developers that cooperated with IBM at the OS/2 project where part of the NT-development team. But honestly, I don't know all the internal details of Microsofts development teams. I have, certainly like you, read about it. And I was starting my career as ICT professional with all these Operating Systems, the full monty :d even with SCO Unix and Linux and Novell Netware that was replaced by NT-Server at all my jobs in that period. Netware had not a good security policy.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [uhillem](#) on Thu, 07 Nov 2024 08:57:43 GMT

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It was supposed to be a replacement for IBM DOS that ran on the IBM PC line of computers. It was meant to be run on the IBM PS/2 computer line. After IBM lost control of the IBM PC/XT/AT line of computers, IBM scrapped the IBM PC line in favor of the IBM PS/2 line. Both the OS and the computer line were a commercial failure. Everyone pretty much continued on with the original PC line in the form of the IBM compatible PC's. Compaq was the beginning of IBM's control being lost when they successfully reverse engineered IBM's BIOS for the IBM PC. Compaq reverse engineered the BIOS in a way to make it completely legal and open up the flood gates for the IBM PC compatible market. OS/2 could also be run on the IBM compatibles as well. It was a real shame that OS/2 was a commercial failure as it was far more stable than the Microsoft Windows of the time. It even had the ability to emulate IBM DOS so you could run old DOS programs. Windows had the Dos Box but was really running DOS in a virtual machine whereas OS/2 was emulating DOS.

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